



# Citizen Update

Winter 2003/2004

## WY Cities to State: Send Money

An Interview with the Mayor and the City Manager

The largest source of income for city operations comes from sales and mineral taxes that the state shares with local governments. The distribution of these monies is set by state law. In 1999, the Wyoming Legislature reduced the share of mineral taxes for local governments. Cities and towns across Wyoming have had to use cash reserves to balance their budgets or cut staff and services.

When the budget session for the Wyoming Legislature begins on February 9, 2004, the main issue will be what to do with the large increase in mineral revenues. Cities and towns across Wyoming will be working with the Legislature to restore ongoing funding. *Citizen Update (CU)* discussed this funding issue with Mayor Barbara Watters (BW) and City Manager Tom Forslund (TF).

*Note: General Fund is the name of the city operations budget.*



Firefighters like Devin Garvin responded to 4,298 calls for assistance in 2003. Emergency dispatch also received 49,818 calls requesting police assistance. The total of 54,116 emergency services calls averages 148 calls per day in Casper.

**CU:** *Has the city had financial problems because of changes in the state sharing formula?*

**BW:** Yes, we've faced funding challenges. For example, the city budget adopted in June had a \$1.1 million deficit requiring the use of reserves to balance the budget.

**TF:** While reserves are available today, these savings will eventually be depleted and cannot be a permanent source of funding.

**CU:** *What can the city and local governments do to address this funding problem?*

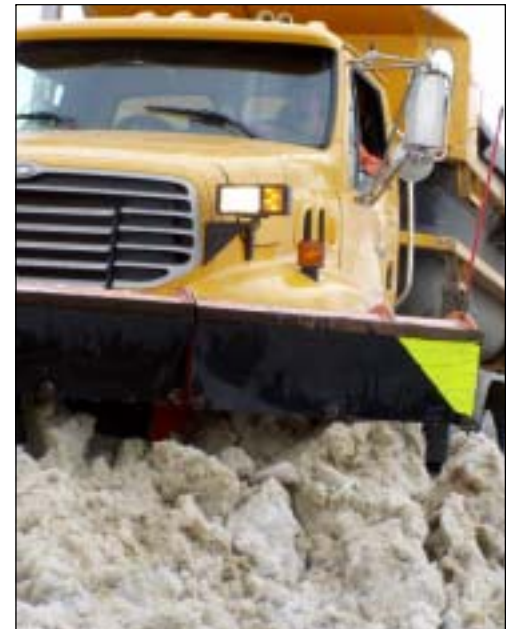
**TF:** The city is looking to the State Legislature to help address this problem during the upcoming budget session. Every city and town in Wyoming has been negatively impacted by the mineral tax share reduction. Since the state is experiencing record surpluses, we hope they will at least restore some of the lost funding.

**CU:** *How are property taxes used?*

**BW:** It's a popular misconception that property taxes provide a large portion of the city's revenue. Property taxes are only 6% of the city's General Fund revenues. The largest share is used to fund Natrona County and the school district.

**CU:** *What about 1% sales tax revenue?*

**BW:** The Optional 1% Sales Tax does not contribute to the General Fund and relies



Snow plow drivers like John Schall keep main streets open. Adequate and dependable funding is needed for City services like snow plowing, emergency response, street repairs, and recreation.

on consumers' willingness to spend money in Casper. One percent money pays for the majority of infrastructure projects like street and water line repairs as well as the purchase of all the city's equipment. These services would be impossible to fund at current levels through the General Fund.

Please see INTERVIEW 2

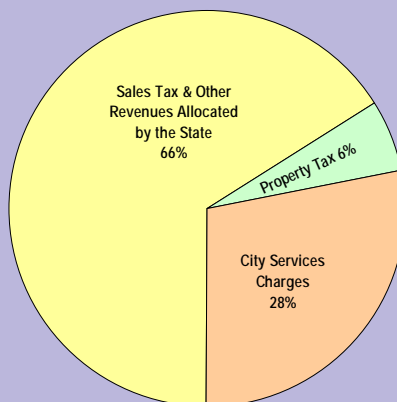


Officer Rich Brown demonstrates one of the Mobile Data Computers (MDC) installed in police patrol cars. Most City services like police, fire, and streets are funded through the City's General Fund. (See General Fund list on page 2.)

# Funding City Services & Facilities

The General Fund is the main City revenue source for basic City services. A significant percentage of General Fund revenue comes from State-shared revenues. Sales tax and mineral tax are the largest sources of State-shared revenue. State-shared sales tax is the single largest contributor to the City's General Fund at 41%.

General Fund Revenue Sources



Mark Dyer and Parks employees maintain 141 acres of special beautification areas.

General Fund Operations

- POLICE
- FIRE
- STREETS
- PARKS
- CODE ENFORCEMENT
- TRAFFIC
- RECREATION
- MUNICIPAL COURT
- FT. CASPAR
- ENGINEERING
- CEMETERY
- CITY COUNCIL
- FINANCE
- CITY MANAGER
- PLANNING
- CITY ATTORNEY
- CATC
- HUMAN RESOURCES
- METROPOLITAN PLANNING



Rails to Trails is one of 4 formal pathways in Casper. Other City outdoor amenities include 44 formal park areas and 38 athletic fields.

## Interview

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**CU:** At this time, are you aware of any legislative efforts that focus on funding for local governments?

**TF:** The proposed state budget includes \$30 million of additional income for municipalities.

**BW:** The proposed allocation is a one-time allocation for helping with the backlog of needed infrastructure repairs. We will continue to work with the Legislature on the long term solution to ongoing funding. City services require adequate and dependable funding. Citizens should know that most of the services they receive on a day to day basis come from their local government, and the percentage of revenues received by local governments is miniscule in the overall scheme of taxes that the average person pays. I would advise citizens to be attentive to proposals before the Legislature that address the need for adequate and dependable funding for local governments and to contact their representatives to voice their support.

## Keeping Casper Clean

### Senior Sidewalkers Volunteer



Senior Sidewalkers have collected an estimated 40,000 pounds of litter. Pictured are Sidewalker members Mark Hopkins, Edythe Mousley, Herty Warnholtz, and Roy Larsen

**T**hirteen years ago, a small group of senior citizens who call themselves the Senior Sidewalkers accepted a challenge from City Manager Tom Forslund to become citizens involved in solving the blowing litter problem in the community.

On May 18, 1990, the Senior Sidewalkers began their volunteer cleanup activities in Highland Park Cemetery and have continued to conduct cleanups in the City's park areas and rights of way.

Cleanup programs like Keep Casper Beautiful's Clean Teams, Casper Area Chamber of Commerce's Adopt-a-Street, and the Wyoming Department of Transportation's Adopt-a-Highway attract many businesses and organizations like the Casper City Council and City Staff that adopted Center Street from I-25 to First Street.

To volunteer for the Senior Sidewalkers or another cleanup effort, call 235-8296.

### Keeping Casper Beautiful 2003

More than 300 volunteers collected in excess of 8300 pounds of litter and debris in cleanup events.

Over 500 trees were planted on public property bringing the number of City-owned trees to over 14,000.

4600 flowers were planted along streets and around public buildings.

854.4 tons of newsprint, cardboard, magazines, office pack, aluminum cans, and white goods were collected and diverted from the landfill for recycling.

2 new recycling depots were added.